



# AREA ADVOCATE~NEWS

...advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change...

Volume IV, Issue I



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Report #146-2007 September 24, 2007 - Monday

### California Legislature

- \* Two Hearings on Lanterman Act Set
- \* Assembly Human Services Committee
- \* 10/24 Hearing in Capitol and 11/16 in San Jose

SACRAMENTO (CDCAN) - Assemblymember Jim Beall (Democrat - San Jose, 24th District), chair of the Assembly Human Services Committee has scheduled two public informational hearings to hear from the public and advocates on ways to "strengthen" the *Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act*, the nation's only state law specifically providing protections and rights to persons with developmental disabilities. No actions on any bills can be taken at informational hearings - but the comments made at these hearings can help focus attention on specific issues including future budget proposals and also influence committee members and staff on different points of view.

Assemblymember Beall, as committee chair, who is also a member of the Assembly's key budget subcommittee dealing with health and human services, is looking at different ideas including measuring performance that result in improved outcomes under the *Lanterman Act*, including recommendations coming from the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism. The commission's life has been extended to November 30, 2008 by enactment of SCR 55 this year.

### Assembly Human Services Committee Public Hearings Set

*October 24 (Wednesday)*

*Sacramento (State Capitol - 447) 1:30 to 5:00 PM*

*November 16 (Friday)*

*San Jose (location to be announced) 1:30 to 5:00 PM*

The public will have the opportunity at each hearing to provide brief public comments relating to the *Lanterman Act*.

### California Only State To Have Civil Rights Law For People With Developmental Disabilities

\* The original *Lanterman Act*, named after the late Republican Assemblyman Frank Lanterman, was passed in 1969 and signed into law by then Governor Ronald Reagan. The Act has gone through several major changes over the years since then - though only once - in November 2003, was there ever a proposal to actually suspend it.

\* The *Lanterman Act* resulted in establishing across the state, community based services for children and adults with developmental disabilities that included protection of rights and meeting individualized needs under a "Individual Program Plan" or "IPP". The *Lanterman Act* covers about 220,000 children and adults with developmental disabilities.

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*California Disability Community Action Network Advocacy Without Borders News Impacting People With Disabilities, Mental Health Needs, Seniors Goes out to over 45,000 people, organizations, policymakers across California Marty Omoto - [martyomoto@rcip.com](mailto:martyomoto@rcip.com) website: [www.cdcan.us](http://www.cdcan.us)*



## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND TRANSITION

### Irlen Syndrome

**Irlen's Syndrome**, was initially called Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome. It was first identified by an Educational Psychologist named Helen Irlen in the 1980's. She wrote a book called: *Reading by the Colors* (Avery Press, 1991), to support individuals with Irlen Syndrome. The exact cause of Irlen remains unknown. However, it is believed to originate in the retina of the eye or in the visual cortex of the brain. Individuals with Irlen Syndrome seem to see words that are blurry, have patterns or appear to move on the page. As the individual continues to read, the problem seems to worsen. Although colored overlays and filters are used to help individuals with Irlen Syndrome, they sometimes appear to reduce the perceptual distortions and visual stress experienced by 'some' children during reading.



#### Sponsored Links

[Special Education Teacher Resources for Special Education Teachers, and Students of Special Ed www.naset.org](http://www.naset.org)

[Reading Intervention Learn more about Ramp-Up Literacy, a proven, double-period curriculum www.ncee.org](http://www.ncee.org)

[Reading Improvement Overcoming environmental conditions Bringing love into learning www.kidsreadingtokids.org](http://www.kidsreadingtokids.org)

However, research is quite limited in this area.

Most people are unaware that they have Irlen Syndrome. Irlen syndrome is often confused for an optical problem, however, it is a problem with processing, the inability or weakness in processing visual information. It often runs in families and typically goes mis-diagnosed as a learning disability or dyslexia.

#### Symptoms of Irlen's Syndrome

- ◆ Trouble reading words
- ◆ Headache while reading
- ◆ Weaker academic performance

- ◆ Weak concentration
- ◆ Complains of eye strain while reading
- ◆ Tires while reading
- ◆ Depth perception is much weaker
- ◆ Will also affect math performance
- ◆ Often exhibits sensitivity to lights especially fluorescent types
- ◆ Trouble focusing
- ◆ Weak/poor comprehension
  - ◆ Difficulty tracking words on a line and will often skip words
  - ◆ Reads in a strained word by word fashion and with great hesitancy
  - ◆ Avoids reading
  - ◆ Weaker written work
  - ◆ Trouble copying
  - ◆ Random spacing
  - ◆ Random letter sizes
  - ◆ Writing up or downhill
  - ◆ Inconsistent spelling

The reason for all of these symptoms is largely due to the fact that print looks different to individuals with Irlen's Syndrome.

#### How can you help?

- ◆ Dimmer lights
- ◆ Natural lighting appears to help
- ◆ Irlen lenses (colored lenses, colored overlays)
- ◆ Colored paper for reading materials and worksheets
- ◆ Additional time for reading assignments
- ◆ If lights can't be dimmed, individuals should be allowed to wear a visor.
- ◆ Shorten time spent on reading
- ◆ Provide more frequent breaks
- ◆ Allow the child to use a ruler to ease the tracking of words while reading.

For more about Irlen's Syndrome, take the [self test](http://irlen.com/index.php?s=selftests) at: <http://irlen.com/index.php?s=selftests>

# THE NORTH COAST JOURNAL OF APPLIED ABILITIES

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Fall 2007

Recognize Abilities, NOT Disabilities

ISSUE LVI

## Supporting an Active Life in the Community

Living a life that includes friends and meaningful activities is important for everyone. Having friends to talk to about your experiences, and to relax and have fun with, can alleviate stress and reduce feelings of isolation and boredom. Participating in activities that allow you to learn new things and experience success keeps your mind and body active, and helps develop a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem.

Having friends and participating in meaningful community activities can support positive mental health.

### Ways to Connect

Ways to participate in your community. You can:

Check your local newspaper for a weekly listing of low cost activities and events.



Use the telephone book to find your city's Parks and Recreation Department or Adult Education program. Call them and ask for information on upcoming classes and activities.

Contact local theaters or museums to see if they have free or low-cost programs, or if they need volunteers.

Find a list of local religious congregations. They often have welcoming activities and volunteer opportunities.



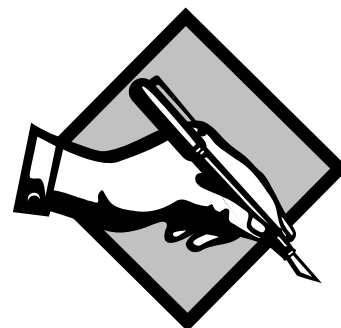
Contact community service agencies and local government officials to see if they need volunteers.



## Arts and Leisure: Opportunities Online

Creative arts, such as drawing or painting, writing (poetry, stories, or articles), dancing, and acting are great ways for individuals with developmental disabilities to express themselves, meet new people, and get involved with their communities.

Below are two organizations in California that work to connect people with disabilities to the world of the arts.



### **The National Arts and Disability Center** (<http://nadc.ucla.edu/index.cfm>)

This organization maintains a resource library including information about arts programs, classes, and performances by and for those with disabilities. They also have an online gallery of visual and literary art by people with disabilities. If someone you support would like to be included in the gallery, there is a submission form on their website!

### **VSA Arts of California** (<http://www.vsacalifornia.org>)

This organization works to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the arts and to arts training. They support an online Artists Community (no fee required), which provides opportunities for support, advocacy, and arts career advancement to artists with disabilities in the State of California. The application to join the VSA Artists Community is on their website!



**REPRINTED FROM:** [The Safety Net](#)

A PUBLICATION OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

PROMOTING CHOICE AND OPTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



# AUTISM NEWS

## AUTISM SAFETY TOOLKIT

**Keeping Our Children Safe**

**A must-read for all parents and caregivers.**

Autism presents a unique set of safety concerns for parents. [Unlocking Autism](#) and NAA have teamed up to provide the following safety information for parents. If you have suggestions or additions that you would like to submit for this page, please email [nancal@aol.com](mailto:nancal@aol.com). Please note: Not all suggestions listed below are right for every family in every neighborhood. Parents should carefully consider the best safety options for their individual child. In a recent online survey conducted by NAA, an incredible 92% of the respondents said their autistic child was at risk of wandering. This is a problem that must be addressed in every city and town across America. Please review the following information and contact your local first responders to get a plan in place for your child and others who may be at risk in your community.

### **Are You Prepared for an Autism Emergency?**

To ensure safety and lower risk for a child or adult with autism, parents and care providers will need to become proactive and prepare an informational handout.

A leading cause for concern are children and adults who run away or wander from parents and care providers. Tragically, children and adults with autism are often attracted to water sources such as pools, ponds, and lakes. Drowning is a leading cause of death for a child or adult who has autism.

Wandering can occur anywhere at anytime. The first time is often the worst

time. Another concern is preparation in the event that you become incapacitated or injured while caring for a person with autism at home or in the community.

An informational handout should be developed, copied and carried with you at all times--at home, in your car, purse or wallet. Also circulate this handout to family members, trusted neighbors, friends and co-workers. The handout will also come in handy if you are in an area other than your neighborhood and are approached by the police.

If wandering is a concern, contact law enforcement, fire and ambulance agencies. Ask your local 911 call center to "red flag" this information in their 911 computer data base. Dispatchers can alert patrol officers about your concerns before they arrive. When we provide law enforcement with key information before an incident occurs, we can expect better responses.

### **Alert your neighbors**

The behaviors and characteristics of autism have the potential to attract attention from the public. Law enforcement professionals suggest that you reach out and get to know your neighbors.

- Decide what information to present to neighbors
- Does your child have a fear of cars and animals or is he drawn to them?
- Is your child a wanderer or runner?
- Does he respond to his name or would a stranger think he is deaf?

*(Continued on page 4)*



(Continued from page 3)

- Plan a brief visit to your neighbors
- Introduce your child or adult or provide a photograph
- If a neighbor spots your child outside of your yard, what is the best way for them to get your child back to you?
- Are there sensory issues your neighbors should know about?
- Give your neighbor a simple handout with your name, address, and phone number. Ask them to call you immediately if they see your son or daughter outside the home. This approach may be a good way to avoid problems down the road and will let your neighbors:
- Know the reason for unusual behaviors
- Know that you are approachable
- Have the opportunity to call you before they call 911

Knowing your neighbors can lead to better social interactions for your loved ones with autism.

### **Autism Emergency Contact Handout Model**

- Name of child or adult
- Current photograph and physical description including height, weight, eye and hair color, any scars or other identifying marks
- Identify your child's favorite song, toy or character
- Names, home, cell and pager phone numbers and addresses of parents, other caregivers and emergency contact persons
- Sensory, medical, or dietary issues and requirements, if any
- Inclination for elopement and any atypical behaviors or characteristics that may attract attention
- Favorite attractions and locations where person may be found
- Likes, dislikes--approach and de-escalation techniques
- A list of things that frighten your child
- Method of communication, if non-verbal - sign language, picture boards, written word

- ID wear - jewelry, tags on clothes, printed handout card; state that your child has autism and is non-verbal if applicable
  - If your child will not wear a bracelet or necklace, consider a temporary tattoo with your contact information. [[www.tattooswithapurpose.com](http://www.tattooswithapurpose.com)]
  - Consider a personal tracking device
- Teach your child to swim-Too often children with autism who wander are attracted to water. Be sure your child knows how to swim unassisted. Swimming lessons for children with special needs are available at many YMCA locations. The final lesson should be with clothes on.
- Map and address guide to nearby properties with water sources and dangerous locations highlighted
  - Blueprint or drawing of home, with bedrooms of individual highlighted
  - Secure Your Home- Prevent your child from slipping outside unnoticed by:
    - Installing secure deadbolt locks that require keys on both sides
    - Install a home security alarm system
    - Install inexpensive battery-operated alarms on doors and windows to alert you when they are opened.
    - Place hook and eye locks on all doors, above your child's reach
    - Fence your yard
  - Investigate the possibility of an Autism Service Dog; for more info go to: <http://autismservicedogsofamerica.com/> or <http://www.4pawsforability.org/autismdogs.htm>

### **Provide local first responders with information on your child.**

On the following page is a sample form based on a form from Pennsylvania Premise Alert, that you may want to use as a guide. Families can have a difficult time relating necessary information in times of extreme stress. This program gives first responders advanced knowledge of special needs individuals in their community allowing them to respond with greater accuracy which increases positive outcomes.

(Continued on page 6)

**PERSON—SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS [SAMPLE FORM]**

Individual's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address, City, State, and ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual's Current Physical Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Eye Color: \_\_\_\_\_ Hair Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Scars or other identifying marks: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTACH  
PHOTO HERE☐ Blind ☐ Deaf ☐ Non-Verbal ☐ Physical Disability ☐ Developmental Disability☐ Cognitive Disability/Mental Retardation ☐ Autism ☐ Mental Health Challenges☐ Diabetes ☐ Prone to Seizures ☐ Alzheimer's Disease ☐ Dementia☐ Acquired Brain Injury ☐ Other Relevant Medical Conditions

Area for further explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

Prescription Medications Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Sensory or Dietary issues, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information First Responders may need: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the Individual live alone ☐ Yes ☐ No Is he/she likely to wander off ☐ Yes ☐ No

Location of bedroom or likely place to find the Individual in the household/residence at night: \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO THE INDIVIDUAL**

Favorite attractions or locations where the Individual may be found: \_\_\_\_\_

Atypical behaviors or characteristics of the Individual that may attract attention of Responders: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual's favorite toys, objects, discussion topics, likes or dislikes: \_\_\_\_\_

De-escalation techniques or approach most likely to calm or attract Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Preferred Communication (If nonverbal: Sign language, picture board, written words, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Identification Information (Does the Individual wear ID jewelry or medical alert bracelet etc. or carry an ID card: \_\_\_\_\_

**EMERGENCY CONTACT**

Name of Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

(Relation to Individual: ☐ Parent/Guardian ☐ Residential Care Provider ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Phone Numbers: Home (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ Work (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ Cell (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_  
Other (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

Alternate Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Contact's Phone Numbers Home (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ Work (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ Cell (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_  
Other (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

(Continued from page 4)

### Tips From Parents

I come from a large family and we have instituted a "hand-off" process with Luke - when we are at family gatherings, you look the person in the eye, ask them if they have Luke and they confirm. At that point, that person knows their primary responsibility is Luke, not side conversations etc. We put this in place after Luke managed to find his way out of a house filled with 32 people. It was winter and the neighbors spotted him running thru the woods - no shoes, no jacket, and they grabbed him. I have also put hook locks on all of the doors which at the moment he can't reach.

\*\*\*\*\*

Get double key sided dead bolts for every out going door in your house or apt. Never let your child see where the keys are kept. My son has attempted to get out that way. He knew exactly what key to use. Never underestimate your child with autism.

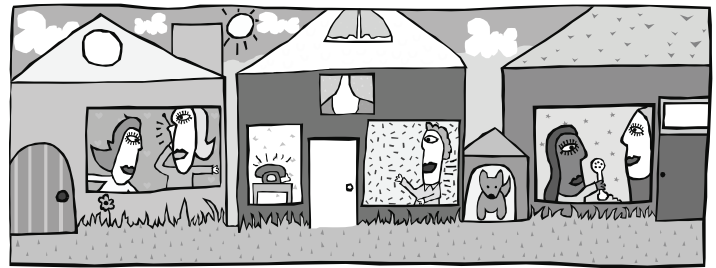
\*\*\*\*\*

I spoke to all the county firemen and EMT on search and rescue of an Autistic child. I quickly covered tons of material and I also stressed that from everything I have gathered, drowning seems to be the number one cause of accidental death in Autistic children. I stressed to them time and time again, that each and every near water source should be checked as a first priority. I went into full detail about all the other places they could hide...If injured how they more than likely could not respond to EMT questions etc. etc. It was only 2 months later did they get to test their new found knowledge. A 4 year old ASD child wandered off from his house, his parents called 911 after about a 20 minute search. The Fire Dept followed my advice and found him in less than 10 minutes standing on the edge of the River Bank. He was safe and not to happy about leaving the waters edge. The towns Fire Chief called me after the fact and gave me the news. He said that without learning these things, he would have instructed all his men to search the parks and

ball diamond first, in the opposite direction of the river!, instead he sent a few to the park and the others to the swimming pool, river and sewer treatment facility.

My point is, just one hour with a group of firemen probably saved the life of a child. I volunteered my time, no experts where hired and not a dime was spent. If we can get others to do the same, what a huge difference it could make for the ASD community.

\*\*\*\*\*



I recently came up with an idea of making magnets with my daughters picture and my husbands and my cell phone on it. I plan on making cookies and going door to door in my neighborhood with both of these. I plan on talking to my neighbors personally, and just saying "hi" and letting them know my daughter has autism and where we live. I plan on leaving them with cookies in the hopes that if they see Chrissy, they will offer her a cookie and take her into their car, home and call me.

I have had issues with flight risk behavior and my neighbors have had Chrissy walk into their home and start eating ice cream out of their freezer and they didn't know what to do. The next time she tried to do this, they actually would not let her in the house and this was very dangerous!! I have felt weird about talking to my neighbors so I came up with this idea. I hope this idea makes it in into your kit, our behavioral supervisor thought it was a great idea and after the news on Benjy, I am going to stop stalling and do it ASAP.





## For Your Information



### **AREA I DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES BOARD**

PO BOX 245, UKIAH, CALIFORNIA 95482-0245

707-463-4700

#### NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
AREA I DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES BOARD  
P.O. BOX 245  
UKIAH, CA 95482

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE: October 3, 2007  
CONTACT: ANNE CAVIGLIA  
PHONE: (707) 463-4700

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities has given Area I Board funds to assist individuals who are clients of the Redwood Coast Regional Center or individuals who have a traumatic brain injury (with the onset before age 22).

The Area I Developmental Disabilities Board is requesting applications from individuals who are working in association with a non profit organization to start their own businesses.

If you would like further information, please contact the Area I Board at: 707-463-4700.

**Serving the Counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake and Mendocino**

**State Council On Developmental Disabilities**

**AREA BOARD I**

*Serving the Counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake and Mendocino*

505 S State Street  
Ukiah, CA 95482

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tional purposes.

*When it comes to alcohol and pregnancy:*

There is no safe time,

No safe amount,

No safe kind.

If you are pregnant, don't drink.

If you drink, don't get pregnant.

[www.calfas.org](http://www.calfas.org)